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MAGHREBI BINDINGS IN OTTOMAN DRESS.
ABOUT CHANGES OF TASTES AND TECHNIQUES IN SAADIAN MOROCCO

The history of Islamic bindings is still in its fledgling stages. A rough chronology of its development and a loose geographical attribution of the various styles provide a sketchy outline for those who are studying this material, although in some cases more precise data have been gathered.[1] The way in which the ornamentation was implemented on leather bindings is the basis for the distinction between an earlier period, when blind tooling with small tools was used, and a more recent phase characterized by the use of plates, the first examples of which date back to the end of the fifteenth century. However, the many instances of manuscripts from an early date protected by a binding decorated with a plate show that one has to examine carefully whether a binding is contemporary with the manuscript it is associated with, since many Islamic bindings were replaced when they started to decay.[2] This is why Western collections may sometimes

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1. The main studies about Islamic bindings are Bosch, Carswell, Petherbridge, *Islamic Bindings*; Haldane, *Islamic Bookbindings*; Raby, Tanındı, *Turkish Bookbinding* and Weisweiler, *Der islamische Bucheinband*.
2. Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 253.

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provide important clues, when they keep Islamic manuscripts completed shortly before entering these collections and still having their original binding. We can in this case surmise that the original bindings were prepared during this short time span for the manuscripts they are still covering.

The aim of this article is to take advantage of such a situation in order to examine the development of bookbinding in Morocco during the second half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, based on the bindings of the sultan's collection kept in the Royal Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial library (Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, RBME). Local workshops were still using blind tooling with small tools, at least at the beginning of the second half of the sixteenth century, as shown by RBME 248 in the El Escorial collection.[3] The manuscript is written in a nice Maghrebi hand and has been completed on 17 *ṣafar* 969/27 October 1561. Its binding is clearly Maghrebi as far as the technique and decoration are concerned. It has been prepared with small tools, stamped into the leather. Within a thick frame with three decorative bands, a circular ornament stands in the centre of the field. Its decoration relies on a braided composition enhanced by nine gilded rosettes forming a square. The inner corners of the field are decorated by a braided motif similar to the central one. They also contain rosettes, which are the only 'coloured' component of the boards' decoration. The latter exhibits irregularities (for instance lines which are not exactly parallel, superposition of the tools during the stamping process, etc.) resulting from the technique used. Various elements in the manuscript suggest that its binding is the original one, made in October 1561 or slightly later. Next to this fine example of traditional binding, I found other Maghrebi copies completed towards the same date and covered by bindings decorated with plates almost identical with those used by binders working in the Ottoman Empire in around the same period. Of course, it may be that the manuscripts were brought from Morocco to the East and bound there. But this hardly seems to be the case since the items I have collected for this study are part of the library of the Moroccan sultan Mulay Zaydān kept today in the San Lorenzo de El Escorial monastery, close to Madrid, which means that they were in Marrakech in 1612.[4]

3. Déroche, "Des miscellanées princières d'époque saadienne", p. 163-174.

4. Castries, *Les Sources inédites* II, p. 106; Lévi-Provençal, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* III, p. viii-ix; Justel, *La Real Biblioteca de El Escorial*, ch. II.2; Herzenshon, "Traveling Libraries."

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Mulay Zaydān's flamboyant father, Aḥmad al-Mansūr, established this library during the second half of the sixteenth century, although there may have been a first Saadian collection before that. It was taken over by Spain at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. In May 1612, Mulay Zaydān was facing a rebellion in the central region of his kingdom. The situation became so tense that he had to flee from Marrakech to the port of Safi on the Atlantic coast, whence he planned to sail to Agadir and reach the Sūs area in Southern Morocco where he could gather support against his enemies. In Safi he chartered a ship, the Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde, captained by Jean Philippe de Castelane from Marseille.[5] He loaded all his belongings on board, including the library he had inherited from his father. Philippe de Castelane set sail for Agadir, which he reached safely. He then asked for the 3,000 ducats that had been agreed upon as a payment for the transport.

After lying off Agadir for some time, Philippe de Castelane became convinced that he would never get paid, and weighed anchor at night. He decided to sail to Marseille where he could sell his cargo. On her journey towards the north, the Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde encountered three Spanish men-of-war that pursued and finally seized her. She was then taken to a Spanish port where the cargo was unloaded and Mulay Zaydān's library became part of King Philip III's, kept in the monastery palace of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. In spite of all his efforts, the Moroccan sultan was never able to recover his books.[6]

This episode had a positive outcome: the library is one of the very few from Islamic lands that has survived almost intact up to the present day. It therefore provides an idea of its state in 1612, and in that sense can be seen as a "time capsule." Most old Islamic libraries were dispersed, and those that have come down to us date from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. In many cases they are Ottoman. But as these collections usually continued to receive new items and to lose older books until the 19th or even 20th centuries, it is very difficult to determine their holdings at a given moment of the past – unless a dated catalogue provides the necessary information. As far as the bindings are concerned, local craftsmen either repaired or replaced those that were in poor condition. In some cases, the change is obvious because the style and/or the technique do not match the date of the manuscript, but in many instances it is difficult

5. Castries, *Les Sources inédites* II, p. 263, n. 1.
6. Justel, *La Real Biblioteca de El Escorial*, p. 191-194.

to determine if only because some tools, such as plates, were used over long periods of time. A close look at the manuscript is then required, in order to detect changes to its initial state. The books of the Saadian sultans' library remained almost untouched, in spite of the losses in the fire that partly destroyed the El Escorial monastery in June 1671.[7] In its present state the collection contains about 2,000 manuscripts. Some were restored in Spain, but their bindings can easily be identified as they were prepared according to Western techniques and bear a decoration indicating their belonging to the El Escorial collection – usually Saint Laurence's gridiron.

The manuscripts began to be investigated scientifically during the eighteenth century. In 1760, Michel Casiri published in Madrid the first volume of the Arabic manuscript's catalogue of the library, followed by the second in 1770.[8] At the time, it was one of the largest collections of Arabic manuscripts in Europe, and provided a wealth of information about Islamic culture – not only in its Moroccan version. The texts were quite understandably the centre of the attention of Western scholars who devoted most of their efforts to them, and still are to this day. Slightly more than a century after Casiri, a French scholar, Hartwig Derenbourg, examined the collection and started to publish a new catalogue (1884-1903).[9] Although death prevented him from finishing this work, Evariste Lévi-Provençal (1928)[10] and H.P.J. Renaud (1941) pursued his efforts.[11] Derenbourg and his followers concentrated on what mattered to them, namely the identification of the texts and the information that would allow them to assess the quality of a copy. Codicology was not a concern at the time, and the history of the manuscripts was only exceptionally taken into account.

7. Ibid., p. 177, 188-190.

8. Casiri, *Bibliotheca arabico-hispana Escurialensis*.

9. Derenbourg, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* I and II.

10. Lévi-Provençal, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* III.

11. Renaud, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* II.2 and II.3. Other shorter and partial catalogues have been published: Vajda, "Notes sur le fonds de manuscrits arabes"; García-Arenal, "Algunos manuscritos de fiqh"; as well as the indices by Cano, *Indización de los manuscritos árabes. See also Justel Calabozo,* "Legajos árabes de El Escorial: nuevas reagrupaciones y varias restituciones a los códices de origen"; Id., "Catalogación del fondo complementario de códices árabes de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial"; Id., "Catalogación del fondo complementario de códice-legajos árabes de la Real Biblioteca de El Escorial".

Of the 2,000 or so manuscripts kept in El Escorial after the losses inflicted by the 1671 fire, more than a third of the dated copies were completed in the sixteenth century. A total of 127 manuscripts in a survey of 366 dated copies in the collection were transcribed during the tenth/sixteenth century (34.7%), followed by those dated to the ninth/fifteen (21.6%) and the eigth/fourteenth (18.3%) centuries. There is therefore a sharp contrast between volumes that may have been ordered by the Saadians and others that were already available on the market. The Saadian dynasty wrenched power from the Wattasids in 1554, claiming to be sharīf, that is to say, descendants of Muḥammad through Ḥassan b. ʻAlī b. Abī Tālib. During the second half of the sixteenth century, Morocco enjoyed favourable economic conditions, primarily owing to its sugar exports to Europe. It was also involved in the diplomatic game of the time: the Saadians had a good relationship with England and the Netherlands, which helped them fend off their powerful Christian neighbour, Spain. They also had a complex relationship with the Ottoman Empire. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans had succeeded in setting foot in North Africa. Like Spain, they were direct neighbours of Morocco and, as such, viewed with suspicion. They were also perceived as a model, nevertheless, and, in a few cases, an ally of one of the Saadian pretenders to the sultanate.

The various catalogues of the collection describe only roughly the kind of script used in the manuscripts[12] and mention their date – even if these data are not always accurate. However, as stated above, codicological characteristics are not taken into account and there is no information about the bindings. It is therefore impossible to know whether a volume still has an Oriental binding or was rebound in the El Escorial according to Western techniques. For this reason, I started looking at the manuscripts in order to estimate the interest of the collection for the history of Islamic bookbinding in general, and for Moroccan bookbinding in particular. I also intended to match the material evidence with the traditional literature on the subject. We are actually fortunate to have various treatises on this craft produced in the Western Islamic world, that provide some information about the techniques used for the decoration.[13] In a paper entitled "Reliures marocaines du XIIIe siècle. Notes sur des spécimens d'époque et de tradition almohades," Prosper Ricard, who pioneered

12. Derenbourg distinguishes between "écriture asiatique" and "écriture magrébine".
13. Ibn Bādīs, *Umdat al-kuttāb*; al-Ishbīlī, *Kitāb al-taysīr*.

research in this field, commented on the information taken from a treatise by a seventeenth-century Moroccan binder, al-Sufyānī. The binder defined the three kinds of binding decoration in use in Morocco at his time.[14] According to Ricard, the three types are found from this period until the nineteenth century. He sums up al-Sufyānī's treatise in the following way:

a. The Oriental type, "conçu à la manière de maintes compositions persanes du XVIe siècle […] avec un médaillon central ellipsoïde, souvent accompagné, aux angles, d'écoinçons au profil lobé ou festonné : organes couverts d'arabesques florales en léger relief obtenu par l'estampage de coins gravés en creux : le tout enfermé dans un cadre tantôt traité au calame et à l'encre d'or, tantôt gaufré sur feuille d'or au moyen de petits fers en bronze ou en acier."[15]
b. "Un type […] d'allure hispano-mauresque, avec médaillon carré à décor d'entrelacs polygonal et, dans les compartiments, de petits motifs floraux : éléments en léger relief obtenu, comme dans le type précédent, par le procédé de l'estampage, et souvent rehaussés d'or et de couleurs. Parfois, dans les angles, s'enclavent, également estampés, des écoinçons à décor floral et au profil de stalactites. Un listel, gaufré sur feuille d'or, encadre le tout."[16]
c. "Un type au décor rare, avec ou sans médaillon estampé ou gaufré, caractérisé surtout par une ou deux chainettes courant dans l'encadrement entre des listels nus, sans or: ensemble d'allure archaïque sinon pure de style employé surtout au XVIIIe siècle.[17]"

The "Oriental type" (a) covers the bindings decorated with mandorla-shaped plates commonly found not only on Ottoman bindings from the sixteenth century onwards, but also further East and, as shown by

14. al-Sufyānī, *Art de la reliure et de la dorure*.
15. Ricard, "Reliures marocaines," p. 110. The Oriental type is "similar to the Persian compositions of the sixteenth century, with an elipsoid central medallion, corner pieces with lobed or festooned shapes; these elements are covered with floral arabesques in light relief resulting from the stamping of plates where the decoration has been incised like an intaglio."
16. Ricard, "Reliures marocaines," p. 110. "Hispano-moorish style, square medallion ornamented with polygonal interlace as well as small floral motives in the compartments; these are in light relief as a result of stamping, as in the previous case; they are often enhanced with gold and colours. Sometimes, corner pieces also stamped exhibit a floral decoration with a stalactite-like shape. The composition is framed by a band in gold."
17. Ricard, "Reliures marocaines," p. 110. "Infrequent decoration, with or without a stamped or gilt medallion, recognizable above all by one or two chain-like lines found in the frame between undecorated bands, without any gilding; this archaic looking composition is found above all in the eighteenth century."

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al-Sufyānī's treatise, in Morocco.[18] To these three types defined by al-Sufyānī at a comparatively late date, Ricard added a fourth one that he discovered on thirteenth century bindings during his researches in the Ibn Yūsuf madrasa in Marrakech, which inherited various collections from religious foundations, including that of the old Kutubiya mosque.[19] This fourth type was actually the old technique of tooling with small tools, alluded to at the beginning of this paper. The tool had to be stamped many times on the leather, often in combination with other similar tools, in order to produce an overall figure. In al-Sufyānī's time, this technique was reduced to a secondary role in the process of decoration, for the frames for instance.

As could be expected, both "Oriental" and Ricard's fourth types are found in the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial collection, with examples of both types associated with sixteenth-century copies. Among the "Oriental" type bindings, I noticed a difference between some manuscripts with a binding exhibiting a decoration using Ottoman plates, and others decorated with plates reminiscent of Ottoman models but definitely not produced by Ottoman craftsmen – a conclusion that will be explained later. In both cases, manuscripts written in Oriental or Maghrebi scripts were involved.

As a first step, I decided to focus on the dated copies and I compiled a corpus including many Maghrebi manuscripts, some of them completed as early as the twelth century, like RBME 415, transcribed in 556/1161.[20] The copies completed before the sixteenth century will provide interesting information about the plates that were used, but they are not relevant for the present study which will focus on dating the change from small tools to plates, and then possibly the use of either type of plates. The chronology of these changes has to rely on the dated copies of the second half of the sixteenth century, a point of prime importance since it means that their bindings were produced after the copy was completed and before 1612, when Mulay Zaydān's collection was seized by the Spaniards. I can surmise, on the basis of the script, that these manuscripts were transcribed in Morocco, although the place where the transcription was performed is rarely indicated in the colophons.[21]

18. However, it would be more accurate to say that it is common in North Africa.

19. Ricard, "Reliures marocaines," p. 110-111; Lings, Ṣafadī, *The Qur'an: Catalogue*.

20. Derenbourg, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* I, p. 277.

21. The time span would indeed be very short for these copies, copied in Morocco, to travel to the East and be bound there. This also implies a change in ownership, as it

All the bindings with central plate decoration are of Type II, that is to say, with fore-edge and enveloppe flaps.[22] On the boards, the central plate, usually in the shape of a mandorla, can be the only ornament, but it may be associated with corner pieces and/or small pendants at both extremities of the central mandorla. The tip of the pentagonal flap is decorated with a smaller plate, usually in the shape of a drop. In addition to the stamping, the binders also used various techniques in order to enhance the appearance of the binding. This involved gilding, painting, stamping the plate(s) on a piece of leather or paper of a colour at variance with that of the board, cut to the shape of the tool and glued over the covering. In some cases, the ornaments are sunk into the board as a result of a preparation of the cardboard, into which compartments the shape and size of the plates were cut, and in which they would be stamped once the leather had been spread over the boards.[23] The frame is usually very simple: fillets and/or a row of a S-shaped tool.

The plate technique allowed for the production of many similar bindings as the same plates were used again and again, unlike the small tools technique, which comprised more changes even if the bookbinder could reproduce a composition on various bindings. In the Ottoman Empire, the ornamental compositions engraved on the plates were to some extent stereotyped and can be described according to a typology which has been established by François Déroche.[24] In principle, a methodical description of the bindings on the basis of this typology could help identifying workshops and simplify the dating of the bindings. As this typology focuses on the structure of the decoration and not on the decoration itself, it would be necessary to supplement it with a detailed analysis of the various kinds of leaves, flowers, etc.

MAGHREBI SCRIPT, OTTOMAN BINDING

Within the corpus of dated Maghrebi copies of the second half of the sixteenth century bound in Ottoman style, I selected a few examples which were quite close to the products of the Ottoman workshops of the

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would have been economically unsound for a Moroccan owner to have his books bound in an Ottoman bindery.

22. Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 289-309.

23. *Ibid*, p. 264.

24. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran* I/2, p. 15-26; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 300-309.

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Fig. 1. RBME 579. Upper board and flap.
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time: RBME 579 is dated 976/1568 and is in the current state of the research the earliest example of a dated Maghrebi copy with a binding in Ottoman style which might have been made in Morocco (Fig. 1).[25] The bright red leather binding is decorated with a central scalloped mandorla with gilt ground. The symmetric composition belongs to the OSd type of Ottoman plates ("O" indicating that the composition does not include "clouds," "S" that it is symmetrical and "d" that it is symmetrical according to both vertical and horizontal axes).[26] The corner pieces have their classical lobed shape, with a floral composition that was originally gilt,

25. RBME 334, dated 908/1502, is earlier, but has probably been rebound. RBME 579 is dated in its colophon with the year in *rūmī* numerals read incorrectly by Derenbourg as 844/1440 (Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 402).

26. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 21; it seems to be a variant of the very successful OSd 1 composition. See also Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 303.

and are outlined by a thin gilded fillet, as is the mandorla. All these elements are sunk deeply into the board, suggesting that the cardboard had been prepared to accommodate the plates and provide a three-dimensional impression. The vertical axis of the board is highlighted by a gilt line supporting two small pendants on both sides of the mandorla.[27] The frame is also gilt and consists of three fillets, with the space between the two closest to the field filled with thick S shapes suggesting a rope design. The fore-edge flap has been preserved. Its decoration is inspired by the earlier tradition, with small irons used for two bands (at the top and the bottom, Weisweiler 55 type)[28] and a central rectangle (Weisweiler 56 type);[29] all these elements are gilt and framed by fillets and the rope composition of the boards. The pentagonal flap is decorated in a style similar to that of the boards.

RBME 215 is another important example, at the other end of the chronological range of this group of bindings. It was transcribed in a Maghrebi hand in 1018/1609 and bound in Ottoman style. Obviously, there was no time to have the copy travelling back and forth between Morocco and the Ottoman Empire, between a Moroccan copyist and an Ottoman binder, during the short span of time between the completion of the copy in 1609 and the seizure of the library in 1612. The leather has very unusual red and green stains everywhere. The boards are decorated with a central scalloped mandorla, with two pendants, and the corner pieces have their classical scalloped shape. As in the previous example, all these elements are deeply sunk into the board, using the same technique as in my previous example. The asymmetric composition of the central mandorla combines *tchi* clouds with a bunch of flowers and leaves; it is close to the NA 5 type ("N" stands for the French "*nuages*", clouds; "A" indicates that the composition is asymmetric).[30] The decorative elements of the decoration have been painted in black on a gilt ground. A gilt fillet, enhanced by *tigh*-s, surrounds the decoration. The board is framed by a gilt band, with S shapes stamped in a row.

RBME 202 is also a Type II binding on cardboard, with its fore-edge and envelope flaps preserved (Fig. 2). Its boards are decorated with a

27. They are similar to those found on RBME 211 binding (Fig. 5), but here they are gilt.
28. Weisweiler, *Der islamische Bucheinband*, p. 70-71.
29. Ibid, p. 71.
30. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 18-19, fig. 5; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 301.

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Fig. 2. RBME 202. Complete binding.(© Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial).

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central mandorla with pendants and four corner pieces, and these seven components are stamped with plates and the ornaments painted in black over a gilt ground. The cardboard has been prepared with the same technique as that of RBME 579, so that the various decorative elements appear to be sunk into the board. The composition of the central scalloped mandorla does not include Chinese *tchi* clouds; it is symmetrical and has its starting point on the side of the mandorla. It is not found among the types described by Déroche, but could be described as OSv 1, as the composition is symmetrical along its vertical axis. The smaller mandorla stamped in the tip of the flap is of the OAi 4 type.[31] The board is framed by a gilt band with S shapes stamped in a row. In many instances, the gilding and the black paint are used in conformity with the Ottoman use. It should be noted however that the paint enhancing the vegetal shapes has not always been applied with the same care as would be the case with a binding produced in Istanbul. Concerning the black paint seen on RBME 202, it cannot be ruled out that the preparation used in Morocco included components different from those used by the Ottoman craftsmen, and was not well adapted to this application. A physico-chemical analysis could help to solve this point.

Other bindings are of a simpler kind, but the plates look typically Ottoman. RBME 229, like the next examples, has a simpler decoration in Ottoman style (Fig. 3). The binding is complete and the decoration consists of a scalloped mandorla with two pendants on the boards and a smaller mandorla in the tip of the flap. Their ground has been gilt. The frame is drawn by various gilt fillets and a thin row of S-shaped stamps, also gilt. The corners of the field are occupied by small triangles. The central medallion has a doubly symmetrical *rūmī* composition. It corresponds to the OSd 1 type (the letter "d" indicating that there is a double symmetry).[32] It is characterized by the four bifid leaves arranged around four fleurons. This is one of the most common compositions and seems to have been popular in Morocco as well, as we shall see later. The binding is closer in its general appearance to the Ottoman examples and it might actually have been produced in an Ottoman workshop. Actually, the date of this Maghrebi copy (803/1400) leaves open the possibility that the manuscript was bound in the Ottoman Empire, then brought back to

31. Ibid., p. 22, fig. 4.

32. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 21; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 303.



Fig. 3. RBME 229. Upper board.
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Morocco. The only evidence to support this hypothesis is the title written on the lower edge in a clear Eastern hand.

RBME 282 is another important element for the chronology: the colophon states that the copy was prepared for Aḥmad al-Mansūr's library, thus between 1578 and 1603 (Fig. 4). An almost rounded plate with scalloped outline was stamped in the centre of the field, framed by a double fillet. The original boards have been preserved by the new Western binding, but the flap is lost. The ground of the floral composition was gilt, but it was applied without much care, sometimes covering the flowers or leaves and leaving some places that are part of the background without gilding. The composition is thus not very clear, and I tentatively suggest comparing it with the OAi 11 type.[33]

33. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 24 and fig. 11; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology,* p. 306.



Fig. 4. RBME 282. Complete binding.
(© Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial).

The plate technique may have become familiar in Morocco as a consequence the book trade through which many manuscripts produced in the Ottoman Empire reached the Saadian kingdom, some of them with a binding decorated in this way. Many volumes in the El Escorial collection are probably examples of this, but research on this specific point will have to decide which bindings were produced in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the sixteenth century Maghrebi manuscripts with "Oriental" type bindings which are also part of the Saadian collection can be copies either written in the Maghrib and bound in the Ottoman Empire, or written by a Maghrebi copyist in the Ottoman Empire and bound there, and then, in both cases, brought back to Morocco. Or the manuscripts were written in Morocco and bound there by a binder who had plates imported from the Ottoman Empire, or by an Ottoman craftsman who had been invited to set up a bindery in Morocco.

A closer look at the bindings suggests that they were decorated by craftsmen who were not fully conversant with the Ottoman *savoir-faire*.[34]

34. This remark is based on the present findings, although it cannot be excluded that evidence of an Ottoman binder's activity in Morocco might turn up. However, as far as the examples I am examining are concerned, we have to surmise that an Ottoman craftsman would be conversant with the techniques and aesthetics of his homeland.

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On RBME 579 (Fig. 1), for instance, the thick S of the frame are very different from the thin tooling one finds on Ottoman bindings. The corner pieces are usually treated in the same way as the mandorla, which is not the case here, as the ground of the latter is gilt, unlike the former. The black paint used by the binder on RBME 202 (Fig. 2) looks different from that of contemporary Ottoman bindings and has been applied without the skill one would expect.

MAGHREBI SCRIPT, IMITATION OF OTTOMAN STYLE

A second group of Maghrebi copies dated to the second half of the sixteenth century and bound in Ottoman style stands apart from the first one for stylistic reasons. A first example is the binding of RBME 211, a copy transcribed in 977/1570 in Morocco (Fig. 5). The plate used by the binder retains the mandorla shape with a scalloped outline. The composition is based on elements recalling the Ottoman leaves and flowers, arranged symmetrically,[35] but the rendition of the various items is simpler: their shape roughly matches the original, but the relief in the detail of the vegetal components is lacking. The vertical axis of the board is indicated by a fillet supporting two pendants similar to those found on the RBME 579 binding (Fig. 1). Interestingly enough, the frame is in a more traditional taste, inspired by models found on bindings produced in the Eastern part of the Islamic world when small irons were in common use. The stamp (type Weisweiler 10) is based on the same pattern as that present on RBME 190 and 1272 bindings (see below).

This binding is decorated with a plate close to the OSd 1 type. It shows how the *rūmī* composition was taken over by Maghrebi craftsmen. The bifid leaf is not as delicate as on the Ottoman example, and in one case has even lost part of the leaf. The fleurons are stylized to such an extent that they sometimes become perfectly unrecognizable. I have yet to find a binding with one of these plates produced in Morocco using the Ottoman technique of gilding and black paint to enhance the decorative composition and play on a greater number of colours. At the most, Moroccan binders combined two kinds of leathers – one of which was cut to the shape of the central mandorla (and, when necessary, to that of the corner pieces).

35. The composition, organized around a central flower, is not found in the typology by Déroche. The same plate has been used for the binding of RBME 112, a copy dated in 531/1136 (Derenbourg, *Les Manuscrits arabes de l'Escurial* I, p. 69).

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Fig. 5. RBME 211. Upper board.
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On the other hand, some of the frames are still produced not only with the old technique (small tools), which is normal since the Ottoman binders did the same, but with a pattern close to Weisweiler type 10, rather than the simple S-shaped tool.[36]

The imitation is even more obvious in the case of RBME 304 (Fig. 6). The binding covered with light brown leather is fully preserved and provides another example of the technique observed on RBME 215, where the cardboard was prepared in order to have sunk compartments for the plates. In addition, pieces of red leather in the shape of the mandorla and the four corner pieces were glued on top of the leather covering the boards. The central scalloped mandorla exhibits a composition reminiscent of the classical Ottoman type OSd 1.[37] However, the bifid leaves

36. Weisweiler, *Der islamische Bucheinband*, p. 63.

37. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 21; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 303. The scalloped outline is not so dense as in traditional Ottoman examples.



Fig. 6. RBME 304. Upper board.
(© Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial).

have lost one element and the leaf itself is hatched; as a whole, the decoration seems quite crowded. The corner pieces are triangular, with a scalloped side facing the mandorla. The *tchi* cloud shapes are apparent in the composition, although they have been transformed by the coppersmith. A Z-like stamp, probably a crude rendition of the Ottoman S-shaped small stamp, is used for the pendants (in a circular disposition) and for the frame, producing a continuous line of chevrons. On the fore-edge flap, the same stamp has been used again on both sides of a central compartment with an arabesque composition stamped on red leather. The corner pieces are found again on the flap, along with a pendant-like ornament in the tip.

RBME 190 and RBME 1272 are written by a Maghrebi hand and date back respectively to 694/1294 and 533/1139. Their bindings are clearly sixteenth century replacements by the same binder, using the same composition and the same tools. The central ornament is a mandorla, but its

outline is not scalloped. The composition involves bifid leaves close to those found on Ottoman plates of the OSd 1 type, but in a local version. It is clear that the coppersmith was not familiar with the shapes he was engraving, and he failed to render the relief that can be observed for instance on the RBME 229 binding (Fig. 3). In both cases, the frame is rather thick, with a band inspired by the same pattern as that of RBME 211 (Fig. 5), but tooled directly by the binder, and a double fillet surrounding the central field. Its corners are marked by a small roundel. The same elements are used again on the flap, with a scalloped drop-like ornament in the tip. The tool used for the frames appears again on the fore-edge flap, in two rows.

The bindings of RBME 132 and RBME 409 are reminiscent of the previous ones, but not identical to them. Both were produced by the same binder, who used the same composition in these two instances. The first binding, RBME 132, is especially important for the chronology of this group: the Maghrebi copyist completed his work in 1003/1595, which means that the plate was in use between the years 1595 and 1612, a precious indication about the transfer of patterns from the Ottoman originals to their Maghrebi imitations. The outline of the central mandorla is not scalloped and the composition is another example based on the OSd 1 type. Its centre is highlighted by a gilt dot stamped later. The ruling indicating the position of the plate has been turned into a component of the decoration; on RBME 409, it is gilt. The frame is especially thick, and wider on the small sides of the board than on the vertical ones. An isolated fillet is close to the edge, while a group of two fillets on each side of a row of S-shaped stamps defines the central field. The corners are highlighted by the stamping of small roundels (identical with that indicating the centre of the mandorla), except on the outer corners of RBME 132 marked with a small oval gilt stamp. On the upper board, on the horizontal axis and close to the left edge of the binding, a gilded stamp is found. The centre of the fore-edge flap and the tip of the flap are decorated by a small composition with small tools.

*

The evidence reported above provides new information about the changes Moroccan bookbinding underwent in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, leading to the situation described by al-Sufyānī at a slightly later date. The bindings of the first group can only have been

produced locally, for some details indicate that the craftsmen were not completely familiar with the Ottoman binding tradition, although they strove to reproduce this model. In addition, it seems improbable that books which were part of the Saadian collection would have been sent unbound to a workshop operating within the Ottoman Empire, then brought back to Morocco with their new binding. In some cases (e.g. RBME 215) the time that elapsed between the completion of the copy and the seizure of the Saadian library was moreover too short to allow for this complicated move. The Moroccan binders were using plates that could either have been imported from the Ottoman Empire or produced locally, with accurate reproduction of the details of an Ottoman model (possibly *via* a drawing on paper). The first hypothesis is strengthened by a similar situation encountered in Venice: a binding of the New Testament, printed in Cologne in 1564.[38] From the outside, this binding exhibits many Western features. There is no protective flap typical of Islamic bindings and the back shows seven cords of alternating thickness, characteristic of Venetian bindings.[39] The boards are decorated with a central scalloped mandorla, the sides of which almost come into contact with the innermost fillet of the frame. The typically Ottoman design of flowers and leaves (type OAi 10)[40] stands out in relief on a gilt ground. The plate of the *Novum Testamentum* binding was certainly produced in an Ottoman workshop and used in a bindery where tools from European and Ottoman origins were found side by side. It may have been located in Italy, perhaps in Venice, or in Istanbul where Venetians were active at that time. However, the relation between the mandorla and the size of the binding or the gilded pointed line are obviously foreign to the aesthetics of Ottoman bookbinding, and the addition of gild did not give the book a genuine Ottoman appearance. A binder working in Istanbul would probably have been more aware of the local production and techniques. The binding of the *Novum Testamentum* is a product *alla turca* of a Western, possibly Venetian, workshop. Plates may have been exported from the Ottoman Empire and Morocco and Venice were at the receiving end of this trade.

The second group of bindings mirrors a slightly different situation. Technically, the binders who produced them were relying on the same

38. It was published by Déroche, "A Western Binding."

39. Castilla, "A Binding for Philip II."

40. Déroche, *Les Manuscrits du Coran*, p. 23 and fig.; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 306, fig. 108.

plate technique as their colleagues who were behind the first group (if they were not the same craftsmen). The difference lies entirely with the aesthetics of the decoration engraved on the plate by a coppersmith. As the production process left no trace and the tools themselves do not seem to have been preserved,[41] we can only offer a hypothesis as to the origin of this second group. As this style of ornament, probably defined as "Oriental" by al-Sufyānī, had an enduring success in Morocco, I can surmise that it was produced by local workshops and not imported. It is clearly not Ottoman. What might be the reason? Various explanations can be proffered. There may have been some reluctance to adopt the Ottoman style wholesale, and coppersmiths were entrusted with the engraving of plates closer to Moroccan taste. Another explanation might be that the success of the plate decoration was so great that the demand for bindings prepared with the new technique could not be met with imported plates only, and that imitations consequently started to be produced locally. A third possible explanation involves the bookbinding economy: the imported plates may have been too expensive, and/or Moroccan coppersmiths who started a local production were unable, for various reasons, to produce plates similar enough to the Ottoman models. The second group of bindings decorated with a mandorla in the centre of the boards reflects this change. The plates are clearly different from the very stable Ottoman repertory, although composition based on the OSd series were apparently very successful.

Can the chronology shed light on this change? On the basis of the evidence collected so far, the earliest instance of the use of an Ottoman plate on a binding prepared by a Moroccan binder, that of RBME 579 (976/1568), predates by only one year the binding of RBME 211 (977/1570), decorated with a plate produced in Morocco (Figs. 1 and 5). If this finding mirrors correctly the sequence of events, the importation of plates preceded the local production, as one might expect. This also means that the importation of bound books from the Ottoman Empire, although important during the sixteenth century, at most made Moroccan book collectors acquainted with this new aesthetics, but was not instrumental in the development of a local production inspired by this model.

41. I did not find any archival material related to this and I have been unable to locate plates that could perhaps provide some information about the place of production, through physical analysis of the metal used for instance.

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The preceding remarks apply to plates prepared by local coppersmiths. Moroccan binders themselves also added a local touch to the bindings – either when using imported Ottoman plates or when working with locally produced tools. As noted above, when painting or gilding were added to enhance the compositions, they were not applied with the same care as in the case of a binding produced in Istanbul. The Moroccan binders were apparently not aware of the normal procedures. In one case, a craftsman using an imported plate added a central diamond and four dots on the two axes, although there was no relationship whatsoever between the composition and these gold flakes. In a second example, a kind of gilt quatrefoil surrounded by a few dots was superimposed on a classical bunch of flowers and leaves. In many instances, the gilded fillet underlining the outline of the mandorla was applied without much care, as was at times the black paint covering the twigs, leaves and flowers of the Ottoman compositions, as noted previously. Moroccan binders also had older tools (for instance for the frames), which they sometimes used in addition to the newly introduced plates.

We are not only dealing with the importation of plates and fashions from the Ottoman Empire to Morocco. Techniques were also involved. Correctly handling the plates when decorating the binding probably required some training and the "three-dimensional" boards required special preparation. How did Moroccan binder learn these new techniques? They had a lasting success, as we can gather from the al-Sufyānī' typology presented by Ricard. His "Oriental type" relies on the use of mandorla-shaped plates, and his "Hispano-moorish style", with polygonal interlace as well as small floral motives in the compartments in light relief, probably derives from the "three dimensional" board technique. For the finest bindings, the association of gilding with paint enhancing the composition stamped on the leather had some success. The same applies to the combination of a piece of leather cut to the exact dimensions of the mandorla which was glued on the board and then stamped.

CONCLUSION

The El Escorial collection sheds a completely new light on the history of binding in Morocco during the sixteenth century. It shows the decline of the traditional bindings with an ornament made with small tools, replaced by a new style inspired by Ottoman models and a technique that was already well known in the Ottoman Empire. A first group of bindings

is characterized by the use of imported Ottoman plates by local binders (Ottoman binders settled in Morocco seem less probable), who imitated the Ottoman fashion. A second group is Maghrebi. In this case, local imitations of Ottoman plates were produced for the binders who blended them with traditional features. The dates of some of the manuscripts and the history of the collection suggest that the change began after the middle of the sixteenth century. The new style was soon fully integrated into the local taste, and Ricard defined it as one of his three styles. Of course, his definition has to be modified since the reference he made to Persian bindings is not valid. One should also add that in al-Sufyānī's time, the earliest Maghrebi technique relying on the use of small irons seem to have been completely forgotten.

What is more interesting is of course the cultural dimension of the changes that I have been analysing here. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Algiers was integrated into the Ottoman Empire. The Moroccan sultans faced this new neighbour with distrust, and pitted Christian Spain against the Ottomans when it suited them. As *sharīf*-s, they took over the title of *amīr al-mu'minīn* that gave them prestige within the Islamic world, especially in their dealings with the Ottoman Empire. In his correspondence, Aḥmad al-Mansūr himself intented to remind the Ottoman sultan that, as a member of the *āl al-bayt*, he was above the scion of the House of Osman.[42] However, the cultural flow was in favour of the adoption by the Moroccans of many Ottoman features. Under Aḥmad al-Mansūr's reign, many Ottoman fashions found their way into the palace of the Saadian sultan.[43] Some Turkish titles were for instance taken up in the army.[44] Aḥmad al-Mansūr's stamp, probably related to his *'alāma*,[45] was sometimes put on books of his collection – a habit foreign to the Western Islamic world at that time but quite common in the Empire.[46] The engraving of his *'alāma* and its shape is clearly reminiscent of Ottoman sultans' seals. Many manuscripts were bought in Istanbul or in other cities of the Empire for the sultan's library.[47] In the art of binding, Moroccan

42. Mouline, *Le califat imaginaire*, p. 69-70.

43. As a young prince, Aḥmad fled to Algiers in order to avoid being killed by his uncle. It is not clear whether he made the journey to Istanbul while he was in Ottoman territory. See Mouline, *Le califat imaginaire,* p. 47.

44. Mouline, *Le califat imaginaire*, p. 151.

45. Ibid., p. 231-232.

46. See for instance the numerous manuscripts with Beyazıt's stamp.

47. Research on the book trade between the Ottoman Empire and Morocco is currently underway as part of the SICLE project.

craftsmen took over the models and the techniques that had developed on the shores of the Golden Horn and – with the help of local coppersmiths – turned them into a local feature.[48]

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48. Further research is needed to fully understand how these binding techniques and aesthetics progressively replaced the traditional craft during the Saadian period.

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Nuria de Castilla, *Maghrebi Bindings in Ottoman Dress. About Changes of Tastes and Techniques in Saadian Morocco*

The history of Islamic bindings is hampered by the lack of evidence about the date and place of production of the bindings. As the library of the Saadian sultans of Morocco (now in San Lorenzo de El Escorial monastery) was captured by Spain in 1612, many bindings are still in the condition they were in at that date.

In this article, I discuss the Ottoman influences on sixteenth-seventeenth century Morocco through the analyses of some of the Maghrebi manuscript bindings kept in the El Escorial collection, using either Ottoman plates or local imitations of the latter. In the light of this study, it will be possible to find some clues about the local production during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and to show how the traditional Moroccan binding techniques started to disappear by the end of the sixteenth century and to be replaced by Ottoman techniques throughout the seventeenth century. All this evidence leads to far-reaching conclusions: more than just a matter of techniques, it is indicative of a change in aesthetics and, more broadly, of the cultural and intellectual relationship between Morocco and the Ottoman Empire, which had reached Algiers by that time.

Nuria de Castilla, *Des reliures maghrébines à l'ottomane. À propos des changements de goûts et de techniques dans le Maroc saadien*

L'histoire de la reliure islamique pâtit d'un manque de données sur la date et le lieu de production des reliures. Entrée dans les collections espagnoles en 1612, la bibliothèque des sultans saadiens du Maroc (de nos jours au monastère de San Lorenzo de El Escorial) contient de nombreuses reliures qui sont dans l'état où elles étaient à cette date.

Dans l'article, j'examine les influences ottomanes dans le Maroc des XVI[e] et XVII[e] siècles à travers quelques reliures de manuscrits maghrébins conservés à l'Escorial et pour lesquelles ont été utilisées des plaques soit ottomanes, soit à l'imitation de ces dernières. À la lumière de cette étude, il sera possible de trouver des indices sur la production locale des XV[e] et XVI[e] siècles et de montrer comment les techniques de reliure marocaines traditionnelles commencèrent à disparaître vers la fin du XVI[e] siècle pour être supplantées par les ottomanes au cours du XVII[e]. Toutes ces données débouchent sur des conclusions d'une portée considérable : plus qu'une simple question de techniques, elles montrent un changement d'esthétique et, plus largement, des relations culturelles et intellectuelles entre le Maroc et l'Empire ottoman qui, à cette époque, avait atteint Alger.